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Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

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The Return of Eden by Northrop Frye. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1965. Pp. 143. $4.95.

Professor Frye's latest book consists of four public lectures on *Paradise Lost* plus a revised version of a paper on *Paradise Regained* that appeared in *Modern Philology* in 1956. The paper on *Paradise Regained* is a classic, and I will say no more about it except that I liked it better in its original version. The public lectures "were conceived as an introduction to *Paradise Lost* for relatively inexperienced students, with the hope that they would also have something to interest the general reader." They were a "distillation of undergraduate lecture notes," but they have "grown more complicated" as they were rewritten for publication. Thus disarmed, the reviewer is at a loss how to proceed. Shall he judge the book merely as a series of witty, urbane, and learned public lectures, or shall he take the hint offered by the reference to greater complexity and judge it by the standards that any book written by one of our most influential critics would seem to demand? If I were to take the first alternative, I would have to say that although as public lectures they are superb, as an introduction to *Paradise Lost* for the undergraduate they will not do. Frye says a great many right things about Milton and *Paradise Lost* and life in general, and no one would think of denying that he has earned the right to say these things, but he ought not to offer them to undergraduates on a silver platter. They should be shown how to earn them too, and this can be done only by rubbing their noses in the text, not by backing away from it as Frye by his example encourages them to do. The kind of engagement with the text that undergraduates ought to emulate may be seen in Louis L. Martz's *The Paradise Within*, a book that deals with Frye's central theme, the internalization of Eden. The contrast in method would provide a topic of discussion in a course in literary criticism.

It is, however, the second alternative I wish to pursue, but before discussing his central theme I should like to comment on some unfortunate aspects of his method as they are revealed in this book. Frye appears to be the victim of his theory that you cannot teach literature, you can only teach criticism, and that criticism and direct experience of literature are two different things. Direct experience, he says, is like seeing colors; criticism is like physics. The well-known aberrations of the history of taste are the result of "the attempt to bring the direct experience of literature into the structure of criticism" (*Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 28). If we accept Frye's general theory of criticism, we begin to wonder, in his words, "if we cannot see literature, not only as complicating itself in time, but as spread out in conceptual space from some kind of center that criticism could locate" (*Anatomy*, p. 17). (The spatial analogy is central to all of Frye's work, and in this respect the *Anatomy* may be regarded as one of the last great monuments of the Ramistic mind.) The result, as it seems to me anyway, is a kind of literary firmament divided into "houses" of tragedy, comedy, satire, etc. in which the stars tend to look pretty much alike, though some shine more brightly than others.

Frye begins by taking a long view of the orb of *Paradise Lost* "Through Optic Glass," and we are not surprised that he manages to assimilate the poem, or parts of it, to *La Sepmaine*, the *Zodiac of Life*, the *Faerie Queene*, the Bible, the Puritan sermon, the Platonic dialogue, the description of an ideal commonwealth, the treatise on the education of a prince, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid* (broken down into a quest followed by a romantic comedy), tragedy (with Nature, sighing through all her works, occupying the place of the chorus), and the Jonsonian masque (Hell as antimasque followed by the "splendid vision of ordered glory" in Heaven). Some of the analogies are brilliant, some are merely commonplace, but one is tempted to paraphrase Dr. Johnson on Donne: "Who but Frye would have thought that the first three books of *Paradise Lost* are a Jonsonian masque?"

When he moves a little closer to the poem Frye's passion for schematic diagrams betrays him into some curious distortions. He asks us to "visualize the dial of a clock" (notice the spatialization of time) as an aid to seeing the "formal symmetry" of the total action of the poem. At the figure 12 is the presence of God. The "main events" of the poem may then be distributed around the clock as follows: (pp. 20-21)

"1. First epiphany of Christ: generation of Son from Father.
2. Second epiphany of Christ: triumph after three-day conflict.
3. Establishment of the natural order in the creation.
4. Establishment of the human order: creation of Adam and Eve.
5. Epiphany of Satan, generating Sin and Death.
6. Fall of the human order. [At the bottom of the clock, naturally.]
7. Fall of the natural order: triumph of Sin and Death.
8. Re-establishment of the natural order at the end of the flood.
9. Re-establishment of the human order with the giving of the law.
10. Third epiphany of Christ: the Word as gospel.
11. Fourth epiphany of Christ: the apocalypse or Last Judgment."

The first four events are narrated in the speech of Raphael, the last four in the speech of Michael. The last four, Frye says, "correspond to the four that we found in the speech of Raphael, but are in roughly the reverse order." Now "roughly" is a word that calls attention to itself in a very unmannerly way in the polite world of these smooth correspondences. And if we look a little more closely at these two sets of four events, we shall see that what "roughly" means is that they are not in reverse order at all. Frye saw that 8, which ought to correspond to 4, really corresponds to 3, and that 9, which ought to correspond to 3, really corresponds to 4. What he did not see, apparently, is that 11, which ought to correspond to 1, really corresponds to 2, as anyone who has studied the symbolism of Christ's triumph knows.

Taking another look at the clock, we notice that Frye has no time for what most students of Milton would regard as the crucial event of the poem: the reconciliation of Adam and Eve with God, an event that is signalized by the almost word-for-word repetition of seven lines at the end of Book X. There seems nothing to do but place it at about 7:30 and to try to save the appearances by suggesting that it corresponds, roughly, to Satan's *failure* to be reconciled, which we must place at 5:30 even though strict symmetry would demand that it fall at 4:30.

We get more schematics in the second chapter, where we learn that there are four *orders* of existence in *Paradise Lost* which correspond, "with some modifications," to the traditional medieval and Renaissance four *levels* of existence. Let us spread these on the page:

Orders	*Levels*
Divine	Grace (presence of God)
Angelic	Proper human order—Eden
Human	Physical order—fallen man
Demonic	Sin and death and corruption

I am not sure I have got this right. On page 21 Frye flatly says "There are four orders of existence in *Paradise Lost*, the divine order, the angelic order, the human order and the demonic order." So far so good, except that if he is going to distinguish between good angels (angelic order) and bad angels (demonic order), he ought to make room for two human orders also. Then on page 39 we hear of the traditional four *levels* of existence, except that in describing them Frye unaccountably refers to them as *orders*: "There is, in the first place, the order of grace or heaven . . . Below this is the proper human order . . ." On page 40 they become levels again, and what we had thought was going to be an illuminating distinction between orders (prelapsarian?) and levels (postlapsarian?) becomes something of a muddle.

These examples betray not only a haziness of thought and expression but also (and more profoundly) a failure to realize that *Paradise Lost* does not possess the kind of symmetry Frye attributes to it. (What kind it does possess I shall suggest in a moment.) Formal symmetry is simply not one of Milton's values; anyone who doubts this should read Chapter III of Joseph Summers' *The Muse's Method*.

In the *Anatomy* Frye says that a "direct experience" is "central to criticism yet forever excluded from it." One cannot help wondering what his direct experience of *Paradise Lost*, which one would have thought to be as rich and exciting as that of anyone imaginable, is really like. Perhaps we get more than a hint in his discussion of the Fall. We must have the passage before us:

> At the same time, Adam is motivated by his desire to live with Eve and his feeling that he cannot live without her. Conceptually and theologically, he is entirely wrong, and we have explained [!] how he should have "divorced" Eve at the moment of her fall. But again, the conceptual and theological situation is not the dramatic one. Adam's decision to die with Eve rather than live without her impresses us, in our fallen state, as a heroic decision. We feel a certain nobility in what Adam does: Eve also feels this and expresses it. When Adam falls, he falls, as Milton says, "Against his better knowledge, not deceived," but he also attracts some sympathy from a reader who feels that if Adam had actually gone back to God accusing Eve of mortal sin and demanding to be released from his contract with her he would have forfeited that sympathy. The reader feels that, whether or not this is the right thing for Adam to do, this is what he himself might well have done if he had been in Adam's place. And that, of course, is exactly Milton's point.

Passing over the incredible arrogance of "explained" (how could a man who loves his wife as much as Adam loved Eve demand a divorce simply because

she has committed a mortal sin?), we note the prim, mincing quality of this passage. *In our fallen state* we feel a *certain* nobility in what Adam does; he attracts *some* sympathy; the reader feels that this is what he himself *might well* have done. There is so much pussyfooting here that for a moment I was not sure whether "this" in the next to the last sentence referred to eating the apple or asking God for a divorce. The scene is a profoundly ambiguous one, of course, but the ambiguities cannot be resolved into a conflict between the "theological" situation and the "dramatic" one. In the dramatic situation Adam knows (and we know) that he is doing the wrong thing, but he feels (and we feel) that he cannot do anything else. Theologically Adam is confronted by a genuine dilemma. On the one hand he knows he ought not to disobey God; on the other hand, he knows he is responsible for Eve and cannot abandon her. And he is simply ignorant of any other theologically acceptable course of action. Even if Frye had been there to explain the situation to him, it is not likely that the notion of asking God for a divorce would have had much appeal. Someone (perhaps it was C. S. Lewis) has suggested that Adam should have asked God to forgive Eve. This is an excellent idea, but of course it could only come from a fallen man. Adam had no knowledge of forgiveness, and who will blame him for not having had imagination enough to think of it?

The central theme of this book is the return of Eden, the "Paradise within" the mind of the man who enjoys the "totality of freedom and intelligence which is God in man" (p. 31). There is a "garden inside the human mind, walled up and guarded by angels still, yet a place that the Word of God can open" (p. 55), the Word having earlier been defined as the power by which God moves downward toward his creatures (p. 50). Again, "The vision of liberty pulls away from the world and attaches itself to the total human body within, the Word that reveals the Eden in the redeemable human soul, and so releases the power that leads to a new heaven and a new earth" (p. 59).

At first I thought the preposition in Frye's title was significant—the return *of* Eden, not the return *to* Eden—but a close reading suggests that it is not. He recognizes of course that Milton did not envisage any kind of return to a physical Paradise: "The washing away of the Garden of Eden in the flood symbolizes the fact that the two levels of nature [the "proper human" and the "physical," the second and third of his levels of existence] cannot both exist in space, but must succeed one another in time, and that the upper level of human nature can be lived in only as an inner state of mind, not as an outward environment" (p. 41). There is "nothing divine in space that man can *now* see, nothing to afford him a model of the new world he must construct within himself" (p. 58). Even in the Garden it was Adam's duty to "concentrate on the Word of God within him and not on the works of God outside him" (p. 56). Nor is there any question of a political Utopia: the "goal of man's quest for liberty is individualization: there is no social model or ideal state in the human mind" (p. 114).

Not every Miltonist will agree that these are profoundly Miltonic statements, but I certainly think they are, and I am grateful to Frye for saying them. On the other hand, he is not as clear about all this as he might be. More than once he speaks of the paradisiac state of mind as an imaginative return *to* Eden: "Every act of the free intelligence, including the poetic intelligence, is an attempt to return to Eden, a world in the human form of a garden, where we

may wander as we please but cannot lose our way" (p. 31). "The world we fell from we can return to only by attaining the kind of freedom to which all education, as Milton defines it, leads, and it is this freedom that is said by Michael to be a happier paradise than that of the original garden" (p. 110). The vision of liberty in the unfallen world, he says, is more especially a vision of domestic liberty. Civil and religious liberty is the concern of dialecticians, but "domestic liberty, the goal of human development itself, takes us from dialectic to the emblematic vision or parable, and requires a poet" (p. 115).

This idea of Eden as an emblematic vision is central to Frye's whole conception of *Paradise Lost*, and it is surprising that he does not develop it at more length. Speaking of the threefold structure of reason, will, and appetite in the human soul he says that reason is subordinate to a higher principle, which is revelation. "The point at which revelation impinges on reason is the point at which discursive understanding begins to be intuitive: the point of the emblematic vision or parable, which is the normal unit in the teaching of Jesus" (p. 74). The story of the fall of Satan is a parable to Adam, he says, and apparently the story of the Garden of Eden is a parable to us. Man can achieve salvation only by "knocking down his idols," as Samson did, and then waiting for a "genuinely new vision," which "can only come from something inside us which is also totally different from us. That something is ultimately revelation, and the kernel of revelation is Paradise, the feeling that man's home is not in this world, but in another world (though occupying the same time and space) that makes more human sense" (p. 97). And if we contemplate the emblematic vision of Eden as Milton did, we shall get "a glimpse of a central point of order which absorbs both hope and disillusionment into serenity" (p. 117), and we shall realize that "the pattern established for man on earth by God was not social but individual, and not a city but a garden" (p. 114).

This view of the centrality of the Garden is a popular one today, though it has not often been stated so eloquently and persuasively. I can only say that I think it is wrong because it omits the figure of Christ, and Blakean statements about "the total human body within, the Word that reveals the Eden in the redeemable human soul" (p. 59), the "world in the human form of a garden" (p. 31), and "the realization that there is only one man, one mind, and one world" (p. 143; this statement actually appears in the chapter on *Paradise Regained*) do not rectify the omission. If it is formal symmetry we are looking for in *Paradise Lost*, the nearest approach to it is provided by the image of Christ, which radiates from the exact center of the poem. His role as Judge of the rebel angels at the end of Book VI, which is a fore-shadowing of his role at the Last Judgment, is assumed again in Book X when he judges Man, and his role as Creator at the beginning of Book VII is anticipated in Book III where he is revealed as man's Intercessor and recreator. In Books I and II his absence is the most terrible of his judgments, and in Books XI and XII his presence in human history, at first in "shadowy types" and then in truth, is the most glorious of his mercies. It is only by contemplating Christ that man can make the moral ascent to God which, as Frye says, has replaced the physical ascent mentioned by Raphael. This is what Adam learns from Michael:

> Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
> And love with fear the only God, to walk
> As in his presence, ever to observe

His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for Truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life;
Taught this by his example whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest. XII, 561-573

We cannot return *to* Eden, and the return *of* Eden can only be accomplished by the creative, metaphoric power of the Word, Who is Christ:

See Father, what first fruits on Earth are sprung
From thy implanted Grace in Man, these Sighs
And Prayers, which in this Golden Censer, mixt
With Incense, I thy Priest before thee bring,
Fruits of more pleasing savor from thy seed
Sown with contrition in his heart, than those
Which his own hand manuring all the Trees
Of Paradise could have produc't, ere fall'n
From innocence. XI, 22-30

WILLIAM G. MADSEN

Emory University

Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964: A Survey of Productions, by J. C. Trewin. Humanities Press: New York, 1964. Pp. xii + 328, pl. 53. $7.50.

Shakespeare and the Reason: A Study of the Tragedies and the Problem Plays, by Terence Hawkes. Humanities Press: New York, 1965. Pp. xiii + 207. $6.00.

Revelation in Shakespeare: A Study of the Supernatural, Religious and Spiritual Elements in his Art, by R. W. S. Mendl. Hillary House: New York, 1964. Pp. 223. $6.00.

It is difficult to believe that all three of these books are about the same author. One would never suspect from Mr. Hawkes' and Mr. Mendl's accounts that Will Shakespeare actually wrote plays for the theater. It is still considered poor taste to speak of Shakespeare in relation to performance, and we all give our tacit consent to Robert Bridges' notion of the corrupting and debasing influence of the Elibzabethan audience on the mind of a fiine poet. In 1966 Shakespeare must suffer for the fact that the novel is our dominant genre and that, especially among critics and university professors, the living theater is comfortably ignored as an expression of popular culture (although the movie, much closer in spirit to the novel, is in high favor).

Mr. Trewin's book has the merit of taking Shakespeare seriously as a professional dramatist. *Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964* is, as its sub-

title says, "A Survey of productions and a history of their changing styles." The book is chiefly about the West End theaters, the Old Vic, and Stratford-upon-Avon, although there are many asides on Shakespeare in the provinces. It is embellished with fifty-three fine photographs (with commentary) from the Mander and Mitchenson Collection, and its fifty pages of chronological appendices (with abbreviated cast lists) give a very useful factual account of Shakespearean productions. The book also has a bibliography and index. Mr. Trewin writes in the easy high style of the practising reviewer. He is almost always pleasant to read, and he knows how to enliven his text with biographical anecdote and quoted aphorism. A certain problem, however, remains of how to get through such an enormous mass of factual material without distracting the reader. This is one of the difficulties inherent in a chronological approach: one must include far too many unmemorable productions.

Mr. Trewin's own point of view toward the playing of Shakespeare is abundantly illustrated in the things he does not like. He is opposed to what he calls "uglification" and "fantastication," where the play becomes the merest vehicle for the producer's fantasy (as in some of the productions of Theodore Komisarjevsky). He steers a middle-ground between the Decorated Romantic Shakespeare of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who "went on magnifying the picture, minimising the text," and the stark, tendentious Shakespeare of William Poel, whose productions often "appeared to be exercises, diagrams for a thesis." Despite a nostalgic appreciation for Edwardian Shakespeare, Mr. Trewin's sympathies clearly lie in the direction of Poel, Edward Gordon Craig, Granville-Barker, and modernism. There is an apt summary of his critical positions at the end of the book:

> None can say, dogmatically, 'This, and this only, is right for Shakespeare,' though it is apparent that the plays are not helped by what Granville-Barker called a 'defensive armouring' of scenery. It can be said with equal truth that they are not helped by a simplicity so consciously simple that it obtrudes as much as Tree's ornate caparison. The fatal thing in the Shakespearean theatre is to deaden excitement, an emotion that varies with the generations. . . . It is agreed at least—and there are firm advances since the century began—that Shakespeare on the stage, as Granville-Barker knew, must have space, speed, a full text, varied and ready speech, and the minimum of smothering intervals.

Mr. Trewin's insistence on undogmatic common sense is very plain in this passage, as well as his fundamental belief in the integrity and vitality of the text of the play.

Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964 is very modest in its claims, and it is a distinct pleasure to share in the author's eclectic good taste. Although Mr. Trewin himself makes no such estimate, one emerges from reading his book with a sense that the three most significant events in the English Shakespearean theater of the twentieth century were: 1) Harley Granville-Barker's production of *The Winter's Tale* at the Savoy, 1912; 2) John Gielgud's production of *Hamlet* at the New Theatre, 1934; and 3) Peter Brook's production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Stratford Memorial Theatre in 1955. I should like to look briefly at these landmarks and the kinds of originality that they represent.

Granville-Barker's *Winter's Tale* is notable for its reaction against the Edwardian Shakespeare of "Accessorial Relief," in which the producer looked upon the text of the play as only the starting-point for his pictorial imagination.

In some sense, Granville-Barker set out to prove the contention of Poel that "Elizabethan stagecraft and its virtues could be employed in a modern theatre," but he manages to escape the narrow puritanism of Poel. He presented the full text of the play—a bold innovation at the time—,reduced the intermissions to one fifteen-minute break, abolished the footlights, used unrealistic backgrounds, and experimented with three acting areas, one of which projected beyond the proscenium arch and over the orchestra pit. Above all he emphasized rapidity of speech: "All must be rapid, continuous, intimate, vital." The production raised a storm of embattled criticism and was withdrawn after six weeks.

Gielgud's *Hamlet* was strongly influenced by the thinking of Granville-Barker and Edward Gordon Craig. Trewin calls it "the key Shakespearean revival of its period. It was a West End victory for a production textually veracious, without anxious showmanship. . . ." It used a simple functional setting, in which symbolic suggestion replaced the sort of pageant realism that had marred so many earlier presentations. And Gielgud himself, with his intelligent and subtle understanding of the poetry, became the prototype of Hamlet for his generation. He expressed, as Rosamond Gilder would say later, "youth's revolt at the destruction of its faith in truth and decency and love." This revival ran for 155 performances, a record exceeded only by Henry Irving's original Lyceum production.

The very fact that Peter Brook chose to do *Titus Andronicus* is itself significant; it was the first performance of the play at the Stratford Memorial Theatre in seventy-six years. Brook did the play so energetically and uncompromisingly that the audience was forced to believe in it as an early study in the Theater of Cruelty. Laurence Olivier's Titus brought home the realization that the character "was a close relative of the Lear we had known long before: the old man on the edge of the gulf. Lear became identified with the storm in his mind, Titus with the sea." By taking a play that was so rarely performed and so badly thought of by Shakespearean readers, Brook deliberately chose to begin on difficult ground and to accomplish a success all the more striking for its paradox. This sort of contentious originality was matched in Brook's controversial production of *King Lear* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1962), with Paul Scofield in the title role. Just as in *Titus Andronicus*, Brook seemed determined to frustrate our expectations and to unsettle our received notions of the play.

In contrast to Trewin's eclectic and commonsensical approach, Terence Hawkes' *Shakespeare and the Reason* is tightly bound by a single thesis: that there is a persistent conflict in Shakespeare between the values of intuition and reason. Other ways of phrasing this dichotomy are: higher reason vs. lower reason, reality vs. appearance, contemplation vs. action—there is an acknowledged debt to G. Wilson Knight for the formulation. Mr. Hawkes proceeds to examine seven plays (*Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, All's Well, Measure for Measure, Othello, Macbeth,* and *King Lear*) in terms of these pairings, with an introductory chapter that traces the medieval roots of the idea.

One of the predictable difficulties of this point of view is that, with categories so broad and so inclusive, anything can be made to fit into them. There is no sense at all of that sort of limitation and exclusion that would help to define the criteria more exactly. Reason and intuition, appearance and reality become, it seems to me, only synonyms for contrasted aspects of general experience. We do not have the feeling that the terms justify themselves. One practical difficulty of Mr. Hawkes' method is that he is forced into embarrassingly simple schematisms. Of *King Lear*, for example, he writes:

> Her [Cordelia's] corpse has something to say, for it represents the price that has had to be paid for the victory of reality and intuition over appearance and reason. Albany now rules, aided by Edgar and Kent. Good has triumphed, right has been restored, and Cordelia's body has been the sacrifice with which it has been bought.

This is embarrassing because its moral complacency doesn't even do justice to Mr. Hawkes' own more complex discussion of the play. There is a similar insistence on two-part symmetry in the chapter on *Othello*:

> Iago represents simple Evil (the simplicity is underlined in that the sea-change has left him 'motiveless' or virtually so), Desdemona simple Good (a condition which has so defeated critics that they have charged her with naïveté), and Othello, quite simply, is forced to choose between the two. Such an uncompromising structure must be the basis of any analysis of the play, and it ensures that the play's action concerns itself primarily with Othello's choice.

This simply will not do as an account of the tragedy—it sheds no light at all on the Cimmerian darkness of Evil—and it suggests that Mr. Hawkes has been fatally ensnared by the siren-song of G. Wilson Knight.

Outside Mr. Hawkes' categories and incidental to them, there is a good deal of valuable insight in *Shakespeare and the Reason*. The author often shows himself a sensitive and original reader of the plays. In the chapter on *Hamlet*, for example, despite an unacceptable Romantic view of Hamlet (the old chestnut of contemplation vs. action), there are keen observations on Claudius as a raisonneur and Polonius and Osric as parodies of him. In general, the identification of the lower reason as the province of villainy and evil is more successful than the parallel connection between tragic virtue and the higher reason.

Not much need be said about R. W. S. Mendl's *Revelation in Shakespeare*. It falls into the category that is pleasantly called in French *la haute vulgarisation*. It is chatty, informal, easy to read, and has absolutely nothing original to say. It seems aimed at the mythical general reader who is just beginning to read Shakespeare, although the great mass of quotation suggests that Mr. Mendl's book may be designed for someone who has not yet begun. For a taste of its quality, we may take at random a passage from the discussion of *Othello*:

> the play is of absorbing, and nowadays, moreover, of topical interest, for the light that it throws on Shakespeare's attitude towards the colour problem. 'Even among those of us today who are indignant at the policy of 'apartheid' and plead on the grounds of religion and humanity for equality of rights between different races, there are many who doubt the wisdom of intermarriage between negroes and white people; that may, however, be a matter of environment: what might be unwise in many countries does not seem to be so in Brazil. But Shakespeare raises the problem in its most acute form.

This sort of approach to Shakespeare does not impel me irresistibly to read any of Mr. Mendl's other books: *From a Music Lover's Armchair* (1926), *The Appeal of Jazz* (1927), *The Soul of Music* (1950), *The Divine Quest in Music* (1957), and *Adventure in Music* (1964).

MAURICE CHARNEY

Rutgers University

The Social Novel: At the End of an Era, by Warren French with a Preface by Harry T. Moore. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966. Pp. vii + 212. $4.50.

Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature, by Donald Pizer with a Preface by Harry T. Moore. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966. Pp. xv + 176. $4.50.

Under the editorship of Harry T. Moore, the Southern Illinois University Press has issued, simultaneously, two small but meaty studies of American fiction which invite, if not comparison, at least consideration in a single review. These two books are the latest additions to a series, now well-known, called "Crosscurrents Modern Critiques." *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, by Donald Pizer, carries the reader on a philosophic journey into the origins of the terms, realism and naturalism, at the turn of the century; *The Social Novel at the End of an Era*, by Warren French, proposes to study two years only, 1939-1940, and uses the search-light of social fact, rather than philosophic theory, as its guide. Both authors arrange their studies around well-known pieces of fiction; needless to say, both make use of a wealth of additional material, literary, journalistic, philosophical, and historical, for these small books are based on a wide range of learning, and assume that the reader has covered at least a portion of the same territory.

Supposing, then, that the reader is familiar with the novels discussed, and is willing to have his views enlarged by new insights, what does he learn from the "crosscurrents" presented by Mr. Pizer and Mr. French?

As he makes clear in his Introduction, Mr. Pizer has gathered into one volume the essays which have already appeared in many magazines and journals over the last decade. The three novelists he selects as representative of realism are Howells, Twain, and James; those he considers examples of naturalism are Norris, Dreiser, and Crane. The essays are connected more or less with these novelists, but the thread which unifies the whole is the effect of science, and especially Darwinianism, on their work. But Mr. Pizer's own preoccupation with science varies from essay to essay. For example, what he has to say in his study of the Garland-Crane relationship is factual, and very useful; it has nothing directly to do with science. His essay on the literary criticism of Frank Norris, on the other hand, which grows from his own book on the subject recently published by the University of Texas Press, has wider philosophic significance. Admitting, as he does, that Norris' critical writing is, for the most part, superficial (even "silly"), Mr. Pizer manages to put meaning into Norris' critical dicta by relating them to the prevailing scientific ideas out of which naturalism grew. Mr. Pizer's essay on Thomas Sergeant Perry is an excellent example of the validity of his claim that the concept of realism was rooted in Darwinian thought. Perry's interest in languages, and his curiosity concerning the literature of France, Germany, and especially Russia, were related, in a sense, to Taine's stress on cultural environment.

Garland, too, like Perry, Howells, James, Dreiser, and all other inquiring minds of the period, was deeply influenced by his reading of Darwin, Taine, Spenser, and other philosopher-scientists of the age. However, in spite of Mr. Pizer's effort to prove that *Crumbling Idols* "embodies a coherent aesthetic

system," Garland remains, to this reader at least, a confused romantic, too easily bowled over by the more potent minds he encountered too late in his life. Garland's annotated copy of Eugène Véron's *Aesthetics*, as Mr. Pizer does not fail to point out, is the source of most of his critical thinking. What, by the way, does Mr. Pizer mean by referring to "the coined word *veritism*"? Of course the term was used many years in the critical writing of Italy before it was picked up by Véron. (See Howells' essay on Giovanni Verga's novel, *The House by the Medlar Tree*, 1886.)

We might suggest that the Chicago Exposition of 1893, and an invitation to deliver a series of summer lectures there, brought into focus the wealth of ideas simmering in Garland's mind. To stroll through the exhibits from many countries, and especially to see for the first time impressionistic paintings from France, was a heady experience to this culturally starved young man from the Middle Border. Though he hoped that the "idols" of the past were "crumbling" at last, he was not able on this enthusiasm (based on an Emersonian sense of individualism) to build a "coherent aesthetic system."

One suspects, in fact, that Mr. Pizer is sometimes lured by philosophic phrases into substituting them for literary valuations. In his effort to prove, for example, that *realism*, as used by Howells and Twain, involved a certain *idealism* in their interpretation of such characters as Silas Lapham and Huck Finn, Mr. Pizer presents a comparison of those two immortals from which the dazed reader emerges with a peculiarly bleak sense that the real point has not been touched. Philosophical lingo obtrudes on literary insight.

Although one can work out the sound thought which lies behind Mr. Pizer's prose, the language is a barrier between author and reader. Is there any such thing, for example, as "a conventional simplistic interpretation of a standard novel"? To borrow one of his own phrases, Mr. Pizer's thoughts on literature often lie "buried" under "reductive generalities." Since his essays on the writers of American fiction are valuable, this curious use of abstract language borrowed from the philosophers, is regrettable; "more importantly" (*wrong*!), it is regrettable that this tendency mars much critical writing to-day.

The "crosscurrents" affecting the modern novels which Mr. French studies, are, as the title of his book implies, social. One must understand at the outset, however, that the author is not here considering what we were brought up to think of as "the social novel,"–for that, too, was outmoded "at the end of an era." It is fair to say, Mr. French points out in his opening chapter, "that 1939 and 1940 marked not only the end of an era in social and political history, but the end of a literary generation, especially in the creation of the social novel," avowedly written for the purpose of propaganda.

The three novelists who, according to Mr. French, foretell in their work the debacle of the world into which they were born, are Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Hemingway. Their novels are not to be thought of as direct attacks on social wrongs but rather as "creative visions" of the period in which they lived. Their presentation is "social" only in the sense that the actual events of those years can be shown to support the fiction of these three prophets of doom. Mr. French gives the reader a forthright explanation of his use of the term "social novel" in his opening chapter. He means by the phrase, he says, "a work that is so related to some specific historical phenomena that a detailed knowledge of the historical situation is essential to a full understanding of the novel at the

same time that the artist's manipulation of his materials provides an understanding of why the historical events involved occurred."

Just as one can debate the question as to whether 1939-1940 actually did mark "the end of an era," so also one can take issue with every phrase of the definition quoted above. To do so, however, would be to miss the pleasure and profit to be found in this very enlightening study. Mr. French seems to be playing a sort of intellectual game with the reader; in his first chapter he clearly lays down the rules we are invited to follow. He himself keeps to the rules, and, by the neat organization of his material, leads the reader forward to a realization of the latent possibilities of his thesis. Chapter 2, "A Troubled Section," is concerned with Faulkner's corner of Mississippi; Chapter 3, "A Troubled Nation," enlarges the circle to Steinbeck's view of the Depression throughout the country; Chapter 4, "A Troubled World," presents the reader with unresolved world-conflicts, as exemplified by Hemingway's own confusion.

The material Mr. French assembles as the background of these novels is exactly what he promised us, the facts "essential to a full understanding of the novel." One wonders, of course, whether a collection of quite other "facts" (law-records, for example, contemporary newspapers, real estate data, and so on) might not seem to the reader also "essential" if presented to him with the skill and knowledge of this author. Mr. French connects his "background" material with what links he can find to the life of the authors themselves, but it is not part of his plan to overstress such links. The fact, for example, that Faulkner's father was relieved of his position as Comptroller of the University of Mississippi because of the political machinations of Governor Bilbo, does not account for Faulkner's view of his state. The larger framework of the political-social climate in the days of Bilbo is more important to an understanding of the particular Faulkner novel, *The Hamlet*, examined by Mr. French.

So also is the larger framework of *Grapes of Wrath* essential to an understanding of the artistic merits of that much-disputed classic by John Steinbeck. This novel, Mr. French points out, is to be seen as one of many back-to-the-land books of the thirties. Innumerable farm-projects were launched during this era of unemployment, and most of them came to a dismal end. Steinbeck's story is not important, then, as a plea for small farms for uprooted people, but it is unforgettable as a reflection of a nostalgic dream of land-ownership always in the human heart. As such, Steinbeck's novel may be looked upon as a "creative vision" of the yearnings of thousands. Even more important is the development of the Joad family from a disparate collection of selfish individuals to a family which has learned, by hard experience, that survival depends on mutual help—a lesson, Mr. French suggests, that the country as a whole has always to re-learn.

The historical events of the Spanish Civil War (now largely forgotten) are necessary to an understanding of Hemingway's most ambitious novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*,—if only to understand what, in fact, Hemingway's stand was in that confrontation of People's Front and Franco's troops. Was Hemingway, as many have supposed, truly in sympathy with the communist-supported peasants of Spain? If so, then why did he stress the brutality and stupidity of the peasants? By a review of Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* and many of his short stories, as well as his scattered contributions to *Esquire* and *The Cosmopolitan*, Mr. French shows that Hemingway was by his own admission a non-political person, interested primarily in the private aspects of living, and as obdurately opposed

to all forms of government interference as was Thoreau himself. Of the three novels studied by Mr. French, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the least *social*, in the sense in which Mr. French is using the word.

Two notable additions to a fine series of books have been made to Cross-currents by Donald Pizer and Warren French; both studies provide new insights into well-known, but not necessarily well-understood, American novels.

CLARA M. KIRK

San Marcos, Texas

The Diaries of Paul Klee, 1898-1918, edited, with an introduction, by Felix Klee. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964. Pp. 424, ill. 66. $10.00.

When Alfred Barr wrote an introduction to the catalog prepared in 1941 for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition of Paul Klee's work, he commented: "Much has been written in German and French about Klee's art. Indeed few living painters have been the subject of so much speculation." Klee died in 1940, but the writing about his work did not cease. In 1946 Hannah Muller was able to list 106 items in the bibliography that accompanied the third edition of the Museum of Modern Art book, and the end was not in sight. Less than a decade later Will Grohmann published the most exhaustive study of Klee's work, Klee's lectures for the Bauhaus had been reissued in several formats, and in 1957 the artist's *Tagebücher* were published for the first time in Germany. The University of California Press has now made these diaries available in English for the first time (except for the abridged passages used by Felix Klee in the 1962 *Paul Klee: His Life and Work in Documents*, published by Braziller), and they add an important new dimension to the picture of Klee given by the many critical works on his art.

I suppose these diaries would be of some interest even to a reader who knew nothing of the art of Paul Klee. They reveal an unusually sensitive, active, witty, talented man, generous in giving time to his friends, equally devoted to music and the visual arts. They begin with Klee's clear reminiscences of his childhood, depict his adolescent preoccupation with sex and his touching and difficult courtship. He records his student days, the growth of his artistic tastes during his trip to Italy, and his responses to the exotic life of Tunisia. He passed through the first World War unspectacularly, rising from recruit to private first class, and indulging in the usual games of securing extra leave and avoiding bad duty assignments. He was devoted to his wife and son, loved his parents (and was occasionally irritated by his father), was a serious violinist and an astute critic of music.

All of this is fascinating in itself, but when the diaries are read in the light of Klee's enormous achievements as an artist and teacher they become infinitely more important. One is tempted to make comparisons with *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but Joyce's progress through successive blinding flashes of revelation is utterly different from the gradual unfolding of understanding that characterized the development of Klee's personality.

Klee remembered that in his ninth year he found he had "a bent for the bizarre" that expressed itself in his discovery of human grotesques in the patterns of marble tabletops in his uncle's restaurant. As his experience broadened this predilection for the unconventional became more pronounced. "I imagine a very small formal motif and try to execute it economically, not in several stages, of course, but in a single act, armed with a pencil." (22 June 1902) Although trained in the academic studios of Munich, and taught to think of art as the representation of the visible world, Klee was unable to keep his imaginative faculties separate from his observation of nature. He was attracted by queerly shaped tree trunks, and by the accidental deterioration of old works of art. He observed a Botticelli painting, and remarked on its "colorlessness partly due to wear. This is what contributes the historic element to a picture and becomes part of it." These observations became the foundation of Klee's artistic credo: economy of means, development of an imaginative motif, an understanding of the expressive possibilities of line and color apart from their use in imitative representation, and a sense of unity in the work of art.

While Klee was deeply moved by older works of art, he realized that he must not copy them; "to want to create something outside of one's own age strikes me as suspect," he wrote at the point when he felt most strongly attracted to satire as a mode of contemporary expression attuned to his particular talents. The process of self-awareness had reached the stage in 1902 when he could write ". . . I have discovered a very small, undisputed, personal possession: a particular sort of three-dimensional representation on the flat surface."

For a time, as we know, he worked in a satiric vein, but developed a less representational technique of drawing as time passed. He evolved the system of letting his images grow out of his imagination and out of the activity of drawing, and then later discovering their significance and affixing titles; of this he wrote in 1905 "It is quite delightful to elaborate such considerations in retrospect."

After about 14 years of very modest success, and very little income from his art, Klee achieved his first public recognition late in 1910 with a series of one-man shows in Swiss museums, and in 1911 the Thannhauser Gallery in Munich showed his work for the first time. The diaries end in 1918, and so tell us nothing about Klee's years of fame and influence. In this book we learn more about the process of becoming an artist than about the mature artist, but then Klee himself was fascinated with the process and seemed to distrust what was too finished—too pat. "In art," he wrote in his diary, "vision is not so essential as making visible."

As a footnote to this account, I should mention the presence in the book of Klee's poetry. His precise, effective prose style can be seen in the *Pedagogical Sketchbook* and his other Bauhaus writings, but his exact, brief, and witty poems have largely gone unknown. In the poems, as in the diary entries themselves, Paul Klee has been well served by his translators (Pierre B. Schneider, R. Y. Zachary, and Max Knight), and his son has edited the book unobtrusively to shape the diary entries into a coherent text. There are just enough illustrations in this handsomely designed volume to introduce Klee's style to the reader, and to whet his appetite for a heartier feast of reproductions in one of the other books on Paul Klee.

ALAN M. FERN

The Library of Congress

To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings by T. S. Eliot. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965. Pp. 189. $4.95.

In *To Criticize the Critic* Mrs. T. S. Eliot brings together a miscellany of her late husband's writings ranging from the 1940's to 1961, with two short pieces written in 1917, on Ezra Pound and on *vers libre*, added in compliance with requests by readers.

The most obvious fact about this posthumous collection had better be stated right off: as literary criticism, and perhaps as anything else, it is of distinctly lower quality than Eliot's earlier collections of prose. In his last book, *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), there are half a dozen essays that justify regarding him as the foremost critic of his time. With the doubtful exception of the excellent "From Poe to Valéry," there is not one such in *To Criticize the Critic*. True, a generous third of the book is not literary criticism at all. Four lectures on the aims of education, delivered at Chicago in 1950, are of course highly interesting, but mainly to the few readers who do not recall his previous social writings, especially *Notes toward the Definition of Culture*, in which his views on the subject were elaborated in the context of his total social theory and so more provocatively set forth.

For all this, the book makes absorbing reading not only because it is the product of a man who was for much of his life a Personality. It is attractive for virtues that have won Eliot admiration even among readers of sharply dissident opinions, the intellectual scrupulousness, the discipline of mind, the prose graceful for its very avoidance of the stylistic graces. These are recompense enough, it may be, for our recognition that in this book Eliot has little really new to tell us. Even when it is no more than an embellishment of familiar themes, as here in "What Dante Means to Me," Eliot's literary criticism never fails of being that "instinctive activity of the civilized mind" of which he speaks in his title essay.

That essay, a 1961 lecture delivered at Leeds not previously available to most Americans, is an "exercise in self-examination." In it he reviews his criticism with the air of one who has no thought of substantially adding to the canon. His observations contain few surprises. The main points he makes about his critical achievement are those which any attentive reader of his more recent prose could easily have anticipated, or which he himself had already suggested, for example in "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1956). He resents the efforts of scholars to find a preconceived consistency in a lifetime of largely occasional critical writings (or worse still their complaints of *in*consistency). He values his practical analyses of favorite poets over the more theoretical speculations like "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Above all, he repeats his confession of embarrassment at the notoriety attained by certain generalizing phrases ("dissociation of sensibility," "objective correlative").

Has he changed his mind over the years? His answer to this question is Yes, but not radically. He mentions the greater maturity and tolerance that we have all noticed in his later criticism, but is not inclined to make any major retractions. Some of his former positions he would now hold only with reservations; some he professes no longer to understand; in some he detects errors of judgment or, more regrettably, errors of tone—arrogance, braggadocio. "Yet," he concludes, "I must acknowledge my relationship to the man who made those statements, and in spite of all these exceptions, I continue to identify myself with the author"

(p. 14). Of inevitable interest to many readers will be his comment on the then "shocking" triple credo of the *For Launcelot Andrewes* preface. As for Anglo-catholicism and monarchy, Eliot's religious views after the lapse of a generation are unchanged, and he continues to favor monarchy "in all countries which have a monarchy" (but why then not in others?). As for his classicism, that and romanticism no longer strike him as very important (p. 15).

The material in this volume dating from the 1950's and '60's on the whole confirms the impression of Eliot's critical evolution conveyed by *On Poetry and Poets*. With fame and maturity the "radical" Eliot receded, could *afford* to recede, allowing the Christian moralist to come increasingly to the fore. More and more, that is, he has come to resemble his own favorite critic of the past, Samuel Johnson, on whom in 1944 he wrote one of the finest appreciations in existence: not so much the Johnson of the *Ramblers* and the *Shakespeare* Preface, but rather the Johnson of the *Lives of the Poets*, still characteristically himself but admirably mellowed, tolerant, judicious where once he was polemical. The younger Eliot had been concerned to isolate literature and the judgment of literature from all extra-literary considerations, an effort he abandoned sometime in the mid-1930's. Now, like the great moralist who thought it always a writer's duty to leave the world better than he found it, Eliot can speak openly of "the illusion of those who believe that literary merit alone can justify the publication of a book which could otherwise be condemned on moral grounds" (p. 26). His profound humanism is revealed when he speaks of the educators' goal of good citizenship as "a moral concept" (p. 84), and in his insistence that educational and social systems are functions of "the ultimate truth about Man," religious truth (p. 116).

Among the distinctly literary essays, the two very early pieces, "Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry" and "Reflections on *Vers Libre*," are interesting chiefly as period documents, though they are certainly not devoid of intrinsic merit. "From Poe to Valéry," the finest item in the collection, is deservedly too well known to need comment here. Though critically thinner, "American Literature and the American Language," an address given in 1953 at Washington University, St. Louis, warrants restudy for several insights. This, for instance:

> . . . Twain, at least in *Huckleberry Finn*, reveals himself to be one of those writers, of whom there are not a great many in any literature, who have discovered a new way of writing, valid not only for themselves but for others. I should place him, in this respect, even with Dryden and Swift, as one of those rare writers who have brought their language up to date, and in so doing, 'purified the dialect of the tribe.' In this respect I should put him above Hawthorne: though no finer a stylist, and in obvious ways a less profound explorer of the human soul. Superficially, Twain is equally local, strongly local. Yet the Salem of Hawthorne remains a town with a particular tradition, which could not be anywhere but where it is; whereas the Mississippi of Mark Twain is not only the river known to those who voyage on it or live beside it, but the universal river of human life—more universal indeed than the Congo of Joseph Conrad. For Twain's readers anywhere, the Mississippi is *the* river. (p. 54)

It might be remarked in passing that the author of "The Dry Salvages" is especially qualified to assess the symbolic possibilities of the Mississippi river. But

the most appropriate praise of these observations is that the more attentively one reviews Twain's masterpiece the more one comes to know what Eliot means and to see that he is right—right about Hawthorne as well as about Twain. Since this is approximately his own praise of a passage in Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets,* we can be sure that Eliot himself would be satisfied to let it go at that.

EMERSON R. MARKS

Wayne State University